

Davis Cup semifinal

Rafter-Kuerten opener



BRISBANE, Australia, July 13: Jet-lagged Pat Rafter may feel he has hit a brick wall, but five days after losing the Wimbledon final he has the responsibility of getting Australia off to a winning start in the Davis Cup semifinal against Brazil, report AFP.

Just days off a plane from London, the dual US Open champion pitted against two-times French Open winner Gustavo Kuerten in what shapes as a barometer of Brazil's chances of upsetting the defending champions on grass.

Guga, as the flamboyant baseliner is referred to by Brazilians, holds the South Americans' hopes of making their first Davis Cup final against either Spain or the United States.

Kuerten, who beat Magnus Norman for his second French Open crown at Roland Garros last month, is drawn to be on court for all three days of the tie at the ANZ Stadium.

With him lie Brazil's psychological odds of dethroning the Australians, whose preparation has been distracted by last weekend's Wimbledon finals and the Mark Philippoussis no-show.

"We all hit a brick wall last night, but it's not too bad because we are waking up early and we do have to wake up early to come on the court tomorrow," Rafter said of the team's hurried exodus from London to Brisbane.

Rafter, ranked 14 in the world after being a former No.1, shrugs off suggestions of a let-down after losing to Pete Sampras in last Sunday's Wimbledon final.

"I've been in this position quite a few times before and I can't see the same thing happening here as what happened in Wimbledon," he said Thursday.

Australian captain John

ORDER OF PLAY

Friday
Pat Rafter v Gustavo Kuerten
Lleyton Hewitt v Fernando Meligeni
Saturday
Sandon Stolle-Mark Woodforde v Jaime Oncins-Gustavo Kuerten
Sunday
Hewitt v Kuerten
Rafter v Meligeni

Mac puts on his tennis shoes

stop gap solution."

He said, "I haven't decided to compete because I have not been able to reach the other players. There is a good chance I will not play, but there is a chance that I could." He said clay was his

also declined citing involvement with a religious group.

McEnroe, who named Sampras behind Australian Rod Laver as the best two players he had seen, said he did not know how badly Sampras was injured.

He said he had hoped the Wimbledon champion would have played doubles to set an example.

"But he could be risking injury," he said.

At the end of the press conference, McEnroe was wished good luck with his depleted team and he responded, "Pray for me."

Zimbabwe have high hopes

HARARE, July 13: Zimbabwe have high hopes of a rapid return to the Davis Cup elite top 16 when they take on Romania here from Friday in a Euro-African zonal final qualifier, reports AFP.

Earlier this year they lost only by 2-3 to the United States. Key player Byron Black is also in form, having reached the last eight of the Wimbledon singles two weeks ago, the first time any Zimbabwean had got that far.

Black, aged 32, whose world ranking is 23, will team up once more with his younger brother Wayne, who is in the top 100.

He played Wimbledon wearing a heavy knee bandage but has been practising without it. However, a bout of flu has left him weakened and there was concern he would not be fully fit in time for Friday's opening singles.

He said that with Sampras and Agassi unavailable highlighted the lack of depth in American tennis following the recent retirement of Jim Courier. McEnroe said he had also approached Michael Chang about his availability, but he

had been unable to reach other players who he would like to represent the US. These included Paul Goldstein and Vince Spadea.

McEnroe described himself as a possible player and as "a

Kiefer's wait proves right

GSTAAD, Switzerland, July 13: Second seed Nicklas Kiefer got lucky with the rain, managing to move into the second round at the 600,000-dollar Gstaad Open Wednesday with just a few minutes of light remaining, reports AFP.

The German, who sacked coach Bob Brett after a first-round loss at Wimbledon, survived an interruption of several hours, then played for ten more minutes in fading light to clinch a win over Spaniard Alex Calatrava 6-3, 7-6 (7/2).

Max Mirnyi of Belarus did the same, but needed a comeback to beat Argentine Mariano Zabaleta 5-6 (3/7), 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

Fourth seed Alberto Costa of Spain, defending champion at the high-altitude clay event, overcame Austrian Stefan Koubek 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 in a match which began in the morning but didn't even go an hour before being halted until mid-afternoon by the rain.

In another early result, Argentine Gaston Gaudio produced the first upset of the week with a knockout of another Spanish Davis player, Juan Carlos Ferrero, beating the third seed 6-4, 7-6 (7/3).

"I fully expect to be our number three," said Costa, who beat Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador for the title here last year and also collected the trophy in 1996."

Gstaad top seed Alex Corretja will be the Spanish number one for the tie, ahead of 20-year-old Ferrero. He plays later here against Swiss Roger Federer.

After two days of rain in the Bernese Oberland with just two matches completed and weather forecasts far from brilliant for the rest of the week, Gstaad organisers are under the gun to squeeze all matches in.

They scheduled 14 to complete the first round on Wednesday, but did not count on a five-hour rain interruption.

Spaniard Alex Corretja makes a backhand return to Swiss Roger Federer at the Gstaad Open yesterday.

Sport

Cricket calendar 2000-2001

Sports Reporter

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on last Saturday announced their annual cricket calendar for the 2000-2001 season.

The highlight among the year's events is Bangladesh's first ever Test match which will be on home soil in January 2001. The BCB has also drawn up an extended domestic programme for different age groups apart from regular events like the leagues of Dhaka and the National League.

The National League is the only first class competition.

THE CRICKET CALENDAR OF BANGLADESH CRICKET BOARD FOR THE 2000-2001 SEASON.

International (home and abroad)

Event

1. ICC Knock-out in Kenya
2. Tour of South Africa and Zimbabwe
3. Triangular tournament in Dhaka
4. Mandan Test in Dhaka
5. Asia Cup in Pakistan

Date

September 25, 2000
October, 2000
November, 2000
January, 2001
April, 2001

Domestic

Event

1. Inter-Club cricket transfer
2. Dalmatian Cricket Tournament
3. Premier Division Cricket League
4. First Division Cricket League
5. Second Division Cricket League
6. Victory Day Cricket Tournament
7. Shaded Mini Exhibition Matches
8. National Cricket League
9. Inter-Club Transfer for Second and Third Division Leagues
10. Third Division Cricket League
11. National School Cricket District and Divisional phases
12. National School Cricket Final phase
13. National Youth Championship Zonal phases
14. National Youth Championship
15. Third Division Qualifiers

Date

October 1-3
October 21-November 15
October 18-January 31
December 1-February 1
December 14-16
February 1-15
February 3-15
October
December 15-February 15
December - March
February - March
January - March
March
April - May

Venue

BNS/DCS/BKSP
DCS/City Club
MOS/UFC/T&T City Club
BNS/DCS
BNS/DCS
Across the Country
BNS
MOS/City Club/UFC/T&T
Districts/Divisions
Not yet decided
All Divisional Headquarters
Not yet decided
MOS/DCS/City Club/UFC/T&T

Coaching Programmes

Event

1. Under-15/17 coaching Division wise
2. Under-15/17 coaching final phase (Dhaka)
3. Under-19 coaching Division wise
4. Under-19 coaching final phase (Dhaka)
5. Under-13 coaching Division wise
6. Umpires Refreshers Course
7. Training of National Team
8. Under-10/12 coaching Division wise
9. Under-15 coaching Division wise
10. Under-15 coaching final phase (Dhaka)

Month

May, 2000
June, 2000
September-October, 2000
October-December, 2000
September-October, 2000
June, 2000
August-September, 2000
September-October, 2000
May, 2001
June, 2001

Note :
BNS : Bangabandhu National Stadium
DCS : Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium
UFC : Uttara Friends Club
MOS : Mirpur Outer Stadium
T&T : Mahakali T&T Ground

Seles dreaming of Sydney

HARTFORD, Connecticut, July 13: Former world number one Monica Seles has declared the United States Olympic tennis lineup for Sydney a "Dream Team" and looks to bring home gold in September, reports AFP.

"I'm so excited to go," Seles said here Wednesday. "We have a Dream Team of our own and hopefully we can win it and bring home the gold." It was such a nice surprise to make it, I said.

Seles edged Serena Williams for the final singles spot on the US women's team, which also includes Wimbledon champion Venus Williams and reigning US Open queen Lindsay Davenport.

Seles, 26, suffered a stress fracture to a right foot last September that kept her sidelined for six months. The left-hander made a triumphant return last February, winning a WTA title at Oklahoma City.

"Because I'm African American, it makes me feel good to see something that she's doing to see some of my people out there striving and succeeding," Moore said.

While Moore said she has been a tennis fan for years, she never even noticed the World Team Tennis matches in Schenectady until this year's publicity over Williams' appearance, coming right after last week's Wimbledon semifinals where Serena lost to sister Venus, the eventual champion.

"We saw it yesterday and said, 'We've got to get there,' said Moore, who attended the match with her 11-year-old son, Brandon.

Williams played World Team Tennis in Delaware on Tuesday, winning all her matches for the Smash, one day after teaming with Venus to win the doubles title at Wimbledon.

Venus Williams became the first African-American woman to win Wimbledon since Althea Gibson in 1957 and 1958. In September, Serena won the US Open, the last of the four Grand Slam tournaments each year, becoming the first black woman to win the event since Gibson in 1958.

"I'm a tennis fan because of these two," Carstaphen said. "She's brought a lot to the game, especially for black people. You realize it's possible."

She's the one

SCHENECTADY, July 13: Serena Williams can see what she's doing for tennis when she looks into the stands at a World Team Tennis match, reports AP.

"There were a lot of people of colour and it was good to see a lot of people getting into a sport they haven't been exposed to," Williams said. "It's great because a lot of people can't afford to get the 10,000 dollars a year."

The audience Wednesday, not quite a sellout at 2,500-seat Central Park stadium, was still largely white and compared with other diversions in this city, 22-33 dollars for a ticket is not cheap.

For residents like Jackie Moore, it's still a step in the right direction.

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Sprint of the champions

SACRAMENTO, California, July 13: The titans of American sprinting, world record holders Michael Johnson and Maurice Greene, will duel for pride and Sydney Games berths in intriguing US Olympic trials, which begin on Friday, reports AFP.

After months of hype and barbs, Johnson and Greene will finally decide who is best at 200 metres on Greene's 26th birthday, July 23, during 10 days of cut-throat trials already filled with interesting sub-plots.

Can Marlon Jones, for example, win both women's sprints and the long jump to launch her quest for five gold medals in Sydney? Will her husband, C. J. Hunter, claim the men's shot put title as he did at last year's World Championships?

The top three finishers in each event will qualify for Sydney.

The trials are the biggest meet of my life right now," said Greene, who has never run at the Olympics despite his two World Championships and world record 9.79 seconds in the 100 metres.

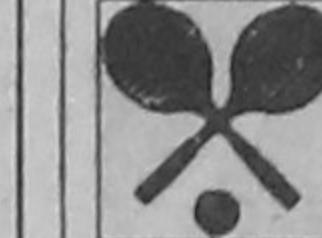


Australian Patrick Rafter waves at the draw ceremony for the Davis Cup semifinal against Brazil in Brisbane yesterday.

— AFP photo

Davis Cup semifinal

No Sampras or Agassi



WHITE PLAINS, New York, July 13: In a surprising turn of events Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi are both out of the United States Davis Cup squad to play Spain next week with 41-year-old captain John McEnroe on Wednesday naming himself temporarily as one of the four players, reports AFP.

The 28-year-old Sampras did not play for the U.S. in the team's first-round tie at Zimbabwe in February due to a hip injury he suffered during the Australian Open. He split his singles matches for the Americans in their quarter-final victory over the Czech Republic in northern Spain, with

World number one Sampras

overcame tendinitis in his left

shin to win his record 13th

grand slam and seventh Wimbledo

n on Sunday at the All-England Club, but was advised by his doctor to take 2-3 weeks off.

Meeting a deadline to an-

nounce the team, McEnroe

stated that if he does play Davis Cup, it would only be in a dou-

bles capacity.

"I haven't actually decided to compete," he said. "There is a good chance I won't play, but there is a chance I will play, and if I take the court, I'm not going out there to lose. Until yesterday, it wasn't even something I was thinking about."

After the U.S. squeaked by in the first two rounds to earn a semi-final berth, McEnroe said the chances of going to Europe and defeating a strong Spanish contingent of players like Alex

Corretja and Juan Carlos Ferrero are "probably 10-20 percent."

"They've (Spain) got three of the top 10 players in the world on clay," McEnroe said. "Now we're going to be huge underdogs."

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